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**Comprehensive review of special political missions**

# Overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/92, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit, at its seventy-first session, a report on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, including efforts towards improving transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender participation, expertise and effectiveness in respect of all special political missions. The Assembly also encouraged the Secretary-General, in this regard, to include relevant detailed information on these matters in the report.

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# I. Introduction

1. Special political missions have remained at the forefront of the United Nations response to the continuing deterioration in global security over the past 12 months. In countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, these missions have continued to play an active role in preventing conflict, bringing the parties to the negotiating table, facilitating peace agreements and supporting local initiatives and complex political transitions to sustain peace. In West Africa and the Sahel, Central Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia and the Great Lakes region, special political missions with a regional mandate are working side-by-side with regional and subregional organizations to identify early warning indicators of crises and build a collective response to prevent them from escalating.

2. In 2016, the operating environment in which special political missions work has continued to increase in complexity. Terrorism, transnational organized crime, arms proliferation, rising intercommunal tensions, environmental degradation, fragmented power structures and institutional fragility are now common features in many of the countries to which they are deployed. As the challenges that the missions face have become more complex, so have their mandates and institutional design. One of the most significant characteristics of missions today is the diversity in their functions and structures. The missions can range from small offices of special envoys carrying out a good offices mandate and regional offices with a preventive function to monitoring teams, groups and panels overseeing Security Council sanctions regimes, field-based missions carrying out specialized mandates, such as electoral observation, and complex, multidimensional operations with comprehensive mandates to support fragile transitions and sustain peace.

3. Today, awareness of the objectives, roles and functions of special political missions is greater than ever, and the active participation of Member States in the discussions of the Fourth Committee on the missions, as well as the regular interaction between the Secretariat and Member States, have been important factors in promoting such awareness. The missions were a central focus of the multiple policy reviews carried out over the past 18 months, in particular the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (A/70/95-S/2015/446), my follow-up report, "The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations" (A/70/357-S/2015/682), and the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly (resolution 70/262) and the Security Council (resolution 2282 (2016)) on sustaining peace. The United Nations system has collectively committed itself to implementing this forward-looking reform agenda, and the present report provides information on aspects of this work.

4. The present report, my fourth, to the General Assembly on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, covers developments during the period from 15 September 2015 to 1 August 2016. Section II focuses on key developments. Section III provides detailed information on the interactive dialogue with Member States, held on 2 May 2016, and the rich exchange on the role of United Nations regional offices. Section IV addresses various policy issues pertaining to the missions, including areas relating to the follow-up to the three major peace and security reviews carried out within the Organization over the past two years. Section V contains some observations on the way forward.

## II. Key developments

5. One major development was the historic commitment taken by the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army (FARC-EP) to end the conflict in that country, which has lasted for more than five decades. On 23 June 2016, following four years of negotiations in Havana, the Government and FARC-EP signed an agreement on a bilateral and definitive ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and the laying down of arms. I had the privilege to attend the signing ceremony in Havana, where I reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to spare no effort in supporting both parties to translate a remarkable negotiating process into an exemplary implementation of the peace commitments.

6. In anticipation of the final peace agreement, the United Nations had already begun its work in preparation for a possible supporting role. On 19 January 2016, the Government of Colombia, on the basis of a joint communiqué with FARC-EP, addressed identical letters to me and to the President of the Security Council in which it requested the establishment of a United Nations special political mission to monitor and verify the laying down of arms and serve as the international component of the tripartite mechanism that would monitor and verify the agreement (S/2016/53). On 25 January 2016, the Council established a political mission of unarmed international observers, namely, the United Nations Mission in Colombia, to undertake the functions outlined by the parties in the joint communiqué. In its resolution 2261 (2016), the Council requested that I initiate preparations immediately, including on the ground, and approved the Mission's mandate for a period of 12 months, which would start following the signing of the peace agreement. Efforts continued in Havana to conclude the peace process and in Colombia to prepare for the beginning of the ceasefire and the laying down of arms.

7. On 28 January 2016, the Security Council requested me to proceed with a merger of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel into the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). The Council's request was preceded by a strategic review carried out by the Office of the Special Envoy from October to December 2015 in New York and in the region, namely, in Bamako, Dakar and Nouakchott, to assess the progress made and to analyse the current challenges and opportunities in facilitating the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. In a letter dated 14 January 2016, I presented the findings of this strategic review and informed the Council of my intention to implement its recommendations, including the initiative of the Office of the Special Envoy and UNOWA. In addition to authorizing the merger, the Council encouraged UNOWAS to make further progress towards the implementation of the integrated strategy and to continue to work closely with the States of the region, including the Group of Five for the Sahel in order to tackle the threats to peace, security and development in the Sahel and their root causes.

8. The United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi (MENUB), which began its operations to monitor and report on the electoral process on 1 January 2015, concluded its mandate on 18 November 2015, following its observation of the legislative and municipal elections (29 June 2015), the presidential elections (21 July 2015), the senate elections (24 July 2015) and the

election of local and municipal leaders (24 August 2016). The Mission's operations ended on 31 December 2015.

9. On 20 July 2015, the Security Council adopted resolution 2231 (2015), in which it endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which had been concluded on 14 July 2015, between China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union, with the Islamic Republic of Iran. On 16 January 2016, as provided for by resolution 2231 (2015), all the provisions of previous resolutions on the Iranian nuclear issue were terminated. On the same day, all the provisions of annex B to resolution 2231 (2015) entered into force. All States are now to comply with paragraphs 1, 2, 4 and 5 and the provisions in paragraphs 6 (a) to (f) of annex B for the duration specified therein and are called upon to comply with paragraphs 3 and 7 of annex B. The provisions include those on nuclear-related transfers, which will apply for up to 10 years, missile-related transfers and financial measures, including an asset freeze, which will apply for up to 8 years, and arms-related transfers and a travel ban, which will apply for up to 5 years. In its resolution 2231 (2015) and the note by its President of 16 January 2016 (S/2016/44), the Council requested that I report on the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015), with findings and recommendations, every six months. My first report was submitted to the Council on 12 July 2016 (S/2016/589). In October 2025, provided that the provisions of previous Council resolutions have not been reinstated in the event of significant non-compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, all the provisions of resolution 2231 (2015) will be terminated and the Council will have concluded its consideration of the Iranian nuclear issue.

10. On 17 December 2015, the Security Council adopted resolution 2253 (2015), by which it decided that the sanctions measures of an asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo would also be imposed with respect to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Da'esh. The Council also renamed the Committee the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. Moreover, the Council, in the same resolution, requested me to add up to two more experts in the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team and to provide the additional administrative and analytical support resources needed to increase its capacity and strengthen its ability to analyse ISIL's financing, radicalization and recruitment, as well as support the resulting increased activities of the Committee by the Secretariat. Additionally, the Council directed the Secretariat, with the assistance of the Monitoring Team, to build and maintain the data model approved by the Committee, with a view to its completion by June 2017, and requested me to provide additional resources in this regard.

11. On 2 March 2016, the Security Council, in response to the fourth nuclear test carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 6 January 2016 and its repeated launching of ballistic missiles in 2014 and 2015, adopted resolution 2270 (2016). The resolution significantly expanded existing sanctions measures and also established new ones regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. An additional 16 individuals and 12 entities were designated as subject to the Council's travel ban and/or asset freeze, while 31 vessels owned by a designated entity were listed in annex III to the resolution as subject to the asset freeze. The Council called upon Member States to report to it within 90 days of the adoption of the resolution,

and thereafter upon request by the Committee, on concrete measures undertaken to implement effectively the provisions of the resolution.

12. On 28 April 2016, the Security Council, in its resolution 2283 (2016), decided to terminate measures concerning the arms and related materiel and travel and financial measures in relation to Côte d'Ivoire. The Council also decided to dissolve the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) and the Group of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1584 (2005).

13. On 25 May 2016, the Security Council, in its resolution 2288 (2016), terminated the remaining arms measures in relation to Liberia. The Council also decided to dissolve the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003) and the Panel of Experts established pursuant to that resolution.

14. On 14 June 2016, the Security Council, in its resolution 2292 (2016), authorized, for a period of 12 months, inspections on the high seas off the coast of Libya, of vessels that Member States have reasonable grounds to believe are carrying arms or related materiel to or from Libya in violation of the arms embargo. In the same resolution, the Council requested that I submit a report on the threat posed to Libya and neighbouring countries by foreign terrorist fighters recruited by or joining ISIL, Al-Qaida and their associates. That report was submitted on 18 July 2016 (S/2016/627).

## III. Interactive dialogue with Member States

15. In its resolution 70/92, the General Assembly requested me to hold regular, inclusive and interactive dialogue on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions and encouraged the Secretariat to reach out to Member States prior to the holding of such dialogue to ensure wide and meaningful participation. Following close consultations with the Bureau of the Fourth Committee, the Department of Political Affairs organized an interactive dialogue to discuss the role of United Nations regional offices in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. The dialogue was held on 2 May 2016.

16. In his opening remarks, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs recalled that regional offices had been a particular area of focus of the peace and security reviews, which reaffirmed their core preventive role as a forward platform for good offices, preventive diplomacy and cooperation with regional and subregional partners. He highlighted a number of recent cases of successful engagement by regional offices in helping Member States to prevent conflict and sustain peace. Building on the historical record of the United Nations offices in West Africa and the Sahel, Central Africa and Central Asia, he shared seven lessons learned: (a) regional offices operated on the basis of national consent; (b) regional offices played a crucial role in preventing crises from escalating, in averting violence and in building sustained working relationships with local, regional and other actors; (c) regional offices were one of the most visible manifestations of the comprehensive and sustained effort made by the United Nations over the past decade to strengthen its regional partnerships; (d) regional offices played a key role in building the capacity of Member States, as well as regional and subregional organizations, in areas relating to conflict prevention and mediation; (e) based on their mandates, regional offices made a key contribution to helping Member States to address transnational organized crime and drug and other illicit trafficking, as

well as other cross-border threats and challenges; (f) regional offices provided a platform for closer coordination with a broad range of United Nations actors, in particular country teams, other special political missions and peacekeeping operations, thus ensuring greater coherence and an all-of-United Nations response; and (g) regional offices were one of the most cost-effective investments in the area of conflict prevention, with annual budgets ranging from 3 to 10 million dollars.

17. In the ensuing discussion, several Member States took the floor and addressed a number of key themes of relevance for special political missions. The majority of speakers underscored the priority that they attached to conflict prevention and called for a redoubling of efforts in that area as a matter of urgency, in line with the recommendations contained in the various peace and security reviews carried out over the past 18 months. Member States also highlighted the credible and discreet role of regional offices in prevention, noting that they had proved to be an effective way of supporting preventive engagements in their regions. A Member State that had received support from a regional office in a preventive context provided a detailed account of how such offices worked closely with national authorities to help them to find inclusive solutions to emerging crises. In that regard, a number of speakers endorsed the recommendation made by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations for an expansion in the network of new regional offices, where appropriate.

18. Member States welcomed the principle that regional offices operated on the basis of national consent, which allowed them to work hand-in-hand with national authorities in carrying out their mandates. They also praised the close collaboration between those offices and regional and subregional organizations for the implementation of their mandates.

19. A number of Member States made reference to the identical resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council and underscored the important role played by special political missions in sustaining peace. They recalled that the resolutions had been designed to shift the peace and security approach of the United Nations from a reactive to a preventive role, highlighting that that was also the rationale of many missions, and of regional offices in particular. They called upon the Organization to work towards reducing fragmentation, as recommended in the resolutions, and ensuring a coherent United Nations response to sustaining peace.

20. The women, peace and security agenda was highlighted by many participants as a priority going forward and an essential step in ensuring that the United Nations could play an effective role in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. Some Member States referred to the findings of the global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which contained specific recommendations for peace operations, including special political missions.

21. Many Member States highlighted the cost-effectiveness of regional offices, noting that they had been able to achieve concrete results in preventing conflict while operating with relatively modest operational budgets. Questions relating to the funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions were also raised by a number of Member States, many of which called for the General Assembly to adopt the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in that regard.

22. Member States welcomed the organization of interactive dialogue on policy issues relating to special political missions and noted that such exchanges between the Secretariat and the membership should be regular and systematized, thus enhancing cooperation and common understanding.

# IV. Key policy issues pertaining to special political missions

**Preventing conflict and sustaining peace**

23. Since the release of the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and my follow-up report, there has been continued urgency and momentum to strengthen the ability of the United Nations to prevent the lapse and relapse into violent conflict. Over the past year, I took a number of steps to transform such a vision of the United Nations into reality.

24. As suggested by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, I have worked to enhance United Nations capacities for conflict analysis, early warning and planning. In 2015, I set up a new analysis and planning capacity in my Executive Office, which plays a crucial role in triggering earlier and more integrated analysis across the United Nations system, including in areas where special political missions are deployed. The Human Rights Up Front initiative has provided a coherent and rigorous framework for an integrated and early response in situations in which there is a risk of serious human rights violations. Internal conflict analysis methodologies are being reviewed and refined to better respond to the operational demands of prevention. These actions are not exclusive to Headquarters. At the field level, the Organization has worked to strengthen the analytical capacities of various missions. I welcome, in particular, the decisions of the General Assembly to strengthen the analytical capacities of UNOWAS and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

25. On 19 February 2016, I submitted a detailed proposal to the General Assembly on ways to revitalize the Organization's work in the area of conflict prevention and mediation (see A/70/745). In particular, my proposal was aimed at reinforcing the core capacities of the United Nations in this area, within the Department of Political Affairs, and to strengthen its work in five key areas: (a) stronger political analysis in areas relating to conflict prevention and mediation; (b) an enhanced ability to address regional and subregional dynamics; (c) closer and more strategic cooperation with regional and subregional organizations in conflict prevention and mediation; (d) an improved ability to translate early warning information into early action, including by expanding the range of deployable and field-based capacities in support of Member States and regional and subregional organizations; and (e) stronger technical expertise in critical areas relating to conflict prevention and mediation, in particular commitments relating to women, peace and security. The Assembly has endorsed parts of my proposal, and I will continue to press my case for the further strengthening of core United Nations capacities in this area, including in the context of the 2018-2019 programme budget.

26. The adoption of the resolutions on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)) provided further impetus to the conflict-prevention agenda across the Organization. In those resolutions, "sustaining peace" is defined as "a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the

needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict". This definition eliminates the distinction between post-conflict peacebuilding and other forms of prevention, recognizing that they are inherently similar activities that rely on a common set of tools. Sustaining peace encompasses all efforts aimed at "addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development". The resolutions also build on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, emphasizing the cross-cutting nature of the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementation of the Agenda will require eliminating fragmentation across the three pillars of peace and security, development and human rights.

27. Sustaining peace lies at the core of the work of special political missions. From missions deployed in a preventive setting, such as regional offices, to those working to find a peaceful solution to a violent conflict, such as the special envoys for the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, and to those deployed to support fragile political transitions, such as our missions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia, making and sustaining peace is a common thread. More specifically, the missions are directly engaged, or have been engaged, in four of the six countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission: Burundi, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone. In the case of the latter country, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone successfully concluded its mandate in March 2014.

28. I welcome the resolutions on the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, which recognize the critical role played by special political missions in this area. The resolutions also clarify the expectations of Member States regarding how our missions in the field should be further adapted. Specifically, I will remain committed to ensuring that the strategic analysis that informs my recommendations to the Security Council on mission design, review and drawdown takes into account the longer-term perspective required for sustaining peace. The question of funding for the implementation of the various peacebuilding mandates of the missions, notably for programmatic purposes in areas relating to institution-building, will remain key.

**Regional partnerships**

29. Close cooperation with regional and subregional organizations is paramount to the success of the conflict-prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding engagements of the United Nations. Special political missions remain at the forefront of this cooperation, working closely with their regional counterparts. In many instances, cooperation with regional or subregional organizations is a core part of their mandate. For example, UNOCA is mandated to cooperate with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and other regional organizations or key partners and to assist them in the promotion of peace and stability in the subregion. Similarly, the newly established United Nations Mission in Colombia is mandated to work side-by-side with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

30. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional or subregional organizations takes place both at Headquarters and in the field. The network of liaison offices established by the Secretariat with regional partners, such as the

African Union (in Addis Ababa), the Southern African Development Community (in Gaborone), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (in Jakarta), and the European Union (in Brussels), has contributed to enhancing day-to-day collaboration. With several regional partners, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Secretariat has signed cooperation agreements that outline key areas of cooperation and mechanisms for regular exchanges. Through its partnerships, the United Nations interacts with its regional and subregional counterparts at all levels, from my communications with the heads of regional organizations to desk-to-desk dialogues. My regular retreats with heads of regional and subregional organizations have been an important forum for taking stock and exchanging experiences.

31. Regional partnerships have also been operational in the field. For example, UNOWAS has worked closely with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to enhance its mediation and early warning capacity. In January 2016, UNOWAS and ECOWAS conducted a joint working session to assess threats and developments affecting the subregion and identify areas for joint activities and programmes. Similarly, UNOWAS has worked closely with ECOWAS towards the adoption of a new regional action plan on women, peace and security. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia cooperates regularly with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and participated in the fifteenth summit of the Organization, held in Tashkent in June 2016. In Central Africa, UNOCA and ECCAS have continued to work together both on country-specific issues, such as the international mediation on the Central African Republic, and to address cross-border challenges facing the subregion, including the threat posed by groups such as Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army. UNOCA and ECCAS recently signed a cooperation framework agreement, in which conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding are placed at the core of UNOCA support for ECCAS. In Somalia, the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union remains the bedrock of international support for a complex peacebuilding and State-building process in the country.

32. The African Union has long been a crucial strategic partner. The United Nations, through the United Nations Office to the African Union, has continued to further advance the partnership with the African Union in conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and field support. In the follow-up to the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, the two entities are developing a joint framework for an enhanced partnership in peace and security that is intended to further institutionalize cooperation and systematize working-level consultations, information-sharing and joint training. It is based on a holistic approach to all stages of the conflict cycle, in particular early warning and conflict prevention. In addition, the United Nations and the African Union have continued to work to address other aspects of the recommendations relating to their cooperation, including the ongoing joint review and assessment of mechanisms to finance and support African Union peace operations authorized by the Security Council. I welcome the historic decision taken on 18 July 2016 by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union that sets out concrete steps towards self-reliance, in particular in relation to its peace and security budget.

33. The partnership between the United Nations and the European Union on peace and security encompasses strategic, policy and operational cooperation, including through the high-level political dialogue, the high-level counter-terrorism political

dialogue, the twice-yearly meetings of the Steering Committee on Crisis Management and the consultations between the Security Council and the European Union's Political and Security Committee. In particular, the United Nations and the European Union intensified their joint work on conflict prevention. The partnership is unique in its scope, with European Union missions and United Nations special political missions deployed in support or in succession of each other in various parts of the world.

34. With many special political missions operating across the Arab world, cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States remains critical. In May 2016, the United Nations and the League held their thirteenth general cooperation meeting, which is held every two years. The meeting was an opportunity for the two organizations to discuss key areas of collaboration, including conflict prevention, counter-terrorism, electoral assistance and the protection of women and children in conflict. The United Nations and the League agreed to continue to strengthen their partnership on issues of international peace and stability and expand the scope and frequency of consultations at all levels.

**Women, peace and security agenda**

35. The 2015 peace and security reviews were a pivotal moment for the women, peace and security agenda. The review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the global study on its implementation were important milestones that took stock of existing challenges and pointed the way forward. Together, the reviews conveyed a strong common message: that the direct and effective involvement and leadership of women in peace processes, politics, public institutions and justice systems was essential to peaceful societies and achieving sustainable development.

36. In order to respond to the expectations of Member States, the Department of Political Affairs took several steps to accelerate progress in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, building on the 15 commitments that the Department had undertaken. In a signal of the importance that the Department attaches to this agenda, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs decided to act as the Department's focal point for women, peace and security issues. Gender-equality objectives and performance measures have been included in my compact with Special Representatives and heads of missions, thus helping to ensure senior management accountability for the translation of these commitments to the field.

37. In order to strengthen its gender architecture and the support that it can provide to its activities in the field, the Department of Political Affairs has established a full, stand-alone gender, peace and security unit and developed a Department-wide gender strategy outlining key priorities relating to gender and women, peace and security issues. The strategy, which was consulted on and shared with all field missions, outlines the Department's areas of focus for the next five years: mainstreaming gender into conflict prevention, efforts to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism, promoting women's political participation through electoral assistance, building capacity on conflict-related sexual violence and expanding partnerships with relevant United Nations entities to link mediation tracks and engage civil society. I am grateful that the General Assembly approved, last June, the establishment of a senior gender adviser position in the Policy and Mediation Division, which will oversee the work of the unit.

38. In the field, the Department of Political Affairs has continued to take steps to translate its women, peace and security commitments into a reality. Since 2014, my reports to the Security Council on special political missions have all contained information on women, peace and security, and an increasing number of missions provide sex-disaggregated data in their analysis. The missions have also continued to seek to increase the number of women participating in United Nations-led or co-led mediation processes.

39. The work of my Special Envoy for Syria illustrates how women's perspectives may be effectively considered at the peace table, in particular in the light of his call for a minimum 30 per cent representation of women in official delegations. In February 2016, he established the Syrian Women's Advisory Board, with the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the first body of its kind in the history of the United Nations. The Board, which comprises 12 Syrian women representatives of civil society organizations, met almost daily with the Office of the Special Envoy during the intra-Syrian talks to provide analysis and advice on gender and to discuss substantive issues. In Libya, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has continued to promote women's participation in the Libyan political dialogue and constitutional drafting process, including through the launch of a separate women's track to ensure regular consultations with activists and the organization of a conference for 38 women's groups, which led to the development of the Libyan women's agenda for peace.

**Flexibility of special political missions**

40. One of the singular features regarding special political missions since the early years of the Organization relates to their flexibility. Throughout the history of the United Nations, the missions have been deployed in various political, socioeconomic and security contexts, and their functions have also varied considerably, ranging from conflict prevention or the facilitation of peace agreements to specialized tasks, such as assisting Member States in border demarcation or disarmament activities, and a wide range of peacebuilding activities. The emergence of these missions was in answer to the need for the Organization to respond flexibly to the wide range of situations in which Member States required support.

41. The historical experience of special political missions shows that the tools available to them can be adapted and fine-tuned to the specific needs of a particular situation, in line with the mandate that the United Nations is asked to perform and deliver. This diversity in mission models is clearly demonstrated by comparing the mandates of various missions, such as the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, MENUB, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the Panel of Experts on Libya and the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations for the Elimination of the Chemical Weapons Programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

42. The diversity of mission models aligns closely with the call made by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations for the Organization to deliver more flexibly tailored missions that are a "right fit" and not a "template". The establishment of the United Nations Mission in Colombia is a case in point. The Government of Colombia and FARC-EP requested the Organization to play a well-defined role, namely, to support, as the international component of the tripartite

mechanism for the monitoring and verification of the peace agreement, the ceasefire and the bilateral and definitive cessation of hostilities and abandonment of arms. The parties also requested that the United Nations work jointly with CELAC, given that the States members of CELAC would provide the unarmed international observers who will monitor the implementation of the agreement. To accomplish this, the United Nations must devise a flexible and creative design for the mission that responds to the demands of the parties and the evolving needs of the situation on the ground and that would be ready to deploy on the first day after the signing of the agreement.

43. The Mission in Colombia is just one of many recent examples of how special political missions have leveraged flexibility in their design in order to more effectively implement their mandates. In Libya, since its evacuation in July 2014, UNSMIL has had to continuously rethink its operational modality in view of the security situation on the ground. A strategic assessment helped to adjust the mission's structure, allowing it to operate from Tunis until conditions on the ground improved, while supporting the formation of a Government of National Accord. After the establishment of the Presidency Council in Tripoli on 30 March 2016, the Security Council encouraged the mission to re-establish a permanent presence in Libya through a phased return, as political and security conditions allowed, to support the recently established organs. Doing so will require the mission to reassess conditions on the ground and its operational profile in order to deliver its mandate, while ensuring that the minimum security requirements are in place for UNSMIL to return to Tripoli.

44. Similarly, in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, the United Nations has been able to regularly adjust the profile of the special political missions to better support the progress made in negotiations. With regard to the Syrian Arab Republic, the Security Council, in its resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016), required the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria to increase the level and type of support provided to the International Syria Support Group. In addition to reviewing elements relating to the mission's profile, the Council required the mission to increase its capacity to support the various mechanisms established in the context of the Group, such as the Task Force on Humanitarian Access and the Task Force on the Ceasefire.

45. In Yemen, developments on the ground also required the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen to adjust its structure and profile in order to support the initiative by Yemeni and international parties to achieve the full and timely implementation of the political transition following the National Dialogue Conference. Further to a request by the Security Council, I presented a plan outlining how the Office would support the next phase of its work with the parties, in particular the development of a road map for the implementation of interim security measures. In particular, I proposed to move the Office to Amman and to strengthen it to perform a number of functions, specifically those relating to good offices and technical assistance to the parties (see S/2016/488). My plan provides for a phased implementation of United Nations support, which would depend on the progress made in the talks in Kuwait, and subsequent rounds, to establish peace.

46. These examples show how the mandates, structures and operational profile of special political missions can be regularly adapted to the specific demands of each situation. As conflicts evolve, both in terms of their political dynamics and security

situation, missions must adapt to the realities on the ground if they are to successfully carry out their mandates. I will continue to engage in a regular dialogue with the Security Council and the General Assembly, as appropriate, in order to ensure that mandates are adjusted to the needs on the ground and to press for administrative and budgetary reforms that continue to increase the flexibility of deployment, in line with the recommendations contained in my report on the future of United Nations peace operations.

**Safety and security**

47. The deteriorating operational environment for special political missions has had major implications for their overall security and for the safety of United Nations staff. As the missions have evolved into one of the most utilized mechanisms of United Nations support for facilitating peace agreements and for their implementation, they have been increasingly deployed to highly volatile situations, including in violent conflicts.

48. Today, some 90 per cent of the personnel working in special political missions are stationed in countries experiencing high-intensity conflict. In a number of operational environments, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, the Organization is exposed to violence, at times as a direct target, in particular by extremist groups. Since the Canal Hotel bombing in Baghdad in 2003, United Nations staff and premises have been targeted by such groups in various settings.

49. Given the civilian nature of special political missions, these contexts present an increasing and direct challenge to the Organization's ability to "stay and deliver". Unlike peacekeeping operations, where a unit within the force may be dedicated to the protection of the mission and its personnel, special political missions have to rely primarily on the host Government for protection. Where the Government's capacity is weak or absent, the missions have limited tools to address their security. In many instances, this has led to the need to evacuate United Nations staff when the security situation deteriorates.

50. A significant implication of the deteriorating security environment for special political missions is its impact on mandate delivery. In volatile environments, a heightened risk of attack against United Nations personnel may lead to the so-called "bunkerization" of the presence on the ground. Heightened security measures, while necessary, may limit the space for outreach and the direct engagement of local communities, thus hindering one of the most important partnerships that a mission needs to establish. In addition, volatile settings can have a significant budgetary impact on missions. In such instances, the security-related costs associated with their presence can constitute one of the main components of their budgets.

51. Over the past few years, the Organization has explored a number of options for ensuring the security of special political missions in the field, such as the deployment of United Nations civilian security personnel, increased cooperation with regional partners that may have military personnel on the ground, the use of private military companies (local companies in the majority of cases), as set out in General Assembly resolution 67/254, and the deployment of guard units authorized by the Security Council. In line with General Assembly resolution 69/133, special political missions operating in environments with high or very high residual security risk levels implement, in coordination with the respective country teams, the

programme criticality framework, which allows for informed decision-making on the acceptable level of risk to United Nations personnel.

52. In order to streamline resources and improve coherence between accountability and the chain of command, the Secretariat is promoting an integration project. The Department of Safety and Security has embarked on a significant programme to integrate all security personnel of the Secretariat under the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, with the full support of the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support (see A/70/383 and General Assembly resolution 70/104). The goal of the project is to have one Department responsible and resourced for all safety and security arrangements and services, which would provide quality and flexible service to all clients of the United Nations security management system at Headquarters and in the field with a single, effective chain of management authority, responsibility and accountability. Integration will be beneficial for special political missions because it will improve security service delivery and increase effectiveness in the use of security resources and the overall professionalism, knowledge, skills and experience of security personnel. Such an approach is crucial in view of the evolving security environment and the need for a more flexible, agile and robust security response capability.

**Geographical distribution and gender representation**

53. Ensuring that the United Nations has employees who reflect the diversity of its membership and its global presence has been one of my core commitments as Secretary-General. Both at Headquarters and in the field, including in special political missions, I have sought to enhance the geographical and gender representation of our staff, in particular when making decisions on senior leadership appointments. In this regard, efforts have been made to bring greater succession planning and flexibility to the process of field appointments, including through the maintenance of a leadership database with profiles of potential candidates for senior leadership positions. The database is continually growing and updated through targeted outreach, with particular focus on Member States that are underrepresented in field missions.

54. Efforts to make the staff of special political missions more representative of the United Nations membership will continue. As of late 2015, the distribution of the 1,053 international staff serving in the missions administered by the Department of Field Support were as follows: 25.4 per cent from the African group, 24.3 per cent from the Asia-Pacific group, 12.7 per cent from the Eastern European group, 4.9 per cent from the Latin America and Caribbean group and 32.7 per cent from the Western European and Others group. In terms of the 1,770 locally recruited staff members serving in the missions administered by the Department, 13.5 per cent were from the African group, 85.4 per cent from the Asia-Pacific group, 0.1 per cent from the Eastern European group and 1 per cent from the Western European and Others group.

55. Improving the representation of women throughout the Organization, including in field-based special political missions, has remained one of the long-standing priorities. While there has been a generally positive trend in this regard since 2006, including in senior leadership positions, progress remains inadequate. As of late 2015, only 28.1 per cent of internationally recruited staff and 13.1 per

cent of locally recruited staff serving in the missions were women, revealing that continued efforts will be required in order to improve the representation of women. I am committed to continuing to identify and appoint women heads and deputy heads in field missions through to the end of my tenure and am confident that this will remain an important objective for my successor. In addition to the appointment of women, it is critical to ensure that the next generation of leaders, both men and women, are fully empowered to carry out their mandates and that women, peace and security issues are prioritized. This is why existing training efforts, such as the high-level seminar on gender and inclusive mediation processes and the high-level mediation course will remain essential to increase the number of women in senior leadership positions and to advance the women, peace and security agenda.

**Transparency and accountability**

56. Over the past 12 months, the Secretariat has continued to take important steps to improve transparency and information-sharing regarding special political missions. The interactive dialogue with Member States remains an important means of exchanging views on specific policy issues. In addition to interactive dialogue, the Secretariat has continued to engage with the membership in a number of different forums and, over the past 18 months in particular, in the context of the three peace and security reviews.

57. One of the most important initiatives in this regard was the high-level thematic debate on peace and security organized by the President of the General Assembly on 10 and 11 May 2016. The event was a unique platform to build on the common trends and synergies among the three reviews and to explore their links to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The conclusions and observations shared by the President on 19 May 2016 further underscore the great importance attached by Member States to conflict prevention. There was a general recognition that the challenges being faced by the Organization will require the United Nations to continually emphasize its diplomatic and preventive functions, seek new partnerships at the political and operational levels and explore effective mechanisms for mandate implementation. The Department of Political Affairs participated in a number of side events during the high-level thematic debate, sharing lessons learned from special political missions in areas such as conflict prevention, regional partnerships and women and mediation.

58. One of the key areas of recommendation from the review of peace operations was the need for accountable, agile and cost-effective field support for all peace operations, including special political missions. In my report on the future of United Nations peace operations, I put forward a comprehensive agenda to make the Organization's systems more field-oriented and responsive to the dynamic needs of our missions on the ground. At the core of this discussion is the need to empower field missions by aligning accountability for results with enhanced authority and decision-making responsibilities.

59. The implementation of most of these recommendations is under way or has been completed. In March 2016, standing administrative measures were put in place to allow for a more efficient crisis response and mission start-ups. These measures have already been successfully applied for the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Colombia. Led by the Department of Management and Department of

Field Support, the Organization has initiated a review of the key processes that may hinder agile and efficient field support, addressing a range of areas, including human resources, acquisition planning and procurement, information and communications technology and budget development.

## V. Observations

60. This is the last report on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions that I will submit during my tenure. I am honoured to have overseen the continued strengthening of interactions between Member States and the Secretariat on overall policy matters pertaining to the missions. The missions continue to be a central component of the toolbox available to the Security Council and the General Assembly to prevent and resolve conflicts and to sustain peace. This is illustrated by the successful work carried out by the missions that have been discontinued during my tenure, such as the United Nations Mission in Nepal, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations for the Elimination of the Chemical Weapons Programme of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Panel of Experts on Liberia. While I am disappointed that some critical challenges facing special political missions have yet to be resolved, such as the question of funding and backstopping arrangements, I am confident that Member States at large see the great value of the work of these missions in the field.

61. Over the past 18 months, we have seen a number of reforms that may change the way in which the Organization operates in the future. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the review of peace operations and the new resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly on sustaining peace have set a new collective agenda that closely links our work in peace and security, development and human rights. Going forward, the special political missions will be critical tools to advance this agenda. They are well placed to turn the abstract commitments made in New York into concrete actions that change the lives and livelihoods of the people they serve in the field. To achieve this goal, they will continue to require the sustained political and financial commitment of Member States.

# Annex

## United Nations special political missions (as at 1 August 2016)

**Special Envoys**

1. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus
2. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region
3. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar
4. Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide
5. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan
6. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria
7. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara
8. Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Yemen
9. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)
10. United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions
11. Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Conflict Prevention, including in Burundi

**Sanctions panels and monitoring groups**

12. Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group
13. Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo
14. Panel of Experts on the Sudan
15. Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
16. Panel of Experts on Libya
17. Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic
18. Panel of Experts on Yemen
19. Panel of Experts on South Sudan
20. Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities
21. Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)
22. Support for the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004)
23. Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate

**Field-based missions**

24. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
25. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process[a]
26. United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
27. United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
28. United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
29. United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau
30. United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
31. United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
32. United Nations Office to the African Union[b]
33. United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
34. United Nations support for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission
35. United Nations Support Mission in Libya
36. United Nations Mission in Colombia

[a] Funded from the regular budget but technically not part of the special political mission budgetary category.

[b] Funded partially from the regular budget but technically not part of the special political mission budgetary category.